

## Teaching of Huang Po

### One Awareness

[An interpretation of Huang Po's teaching with the substitution of commonly-used terms such as 'awareness' for 'mind', 'awakened one' for 'buddha', and so forth.]

The Master said to me: All the awakened ones and all sentient beings are nothing but the one mind [awareness], beside which nothing exists. This awareness, which is without beginning, is unborn and indestructible. It is not of any color and has neither form nor appearance. It does not belong to the categories of things which exist or do not exist, nor can it be thought of as in terms of time, past or future. It can't be described by any words or numbers for it transcends all limits, measures, names, traces, and comparisons. It is that which you see before you — begin to reason about it and you fall into error. It is like a boundless void which can't be fathomed or measured.

The one awareness alone is the Buddha [the 'awakened one'] and there is no distinction between awakened ones and mortal beings — but that mortals, by identifying with form, seek externally for Buddhahood [being awake]. By their very seeking they lose it, for that is using 'being awake' to seek 'being awake'; for that is using awareness to find awareness. They do

not know that, if they were to cease conceptual thought processes, the awakened one is realized, for this awareness is the awakened one and the awakened one is all sentient beings. It is not the less for being manifested in ordinary entities, nor is it greater for being manifested in the awakened ones.

If you are not absolutely convinced that the awareness is the awakened one, and are attached to rituals, meritorious performances, devotions, and like practices, your way of thinking is false and incompatible with the Way. You are fundamentally complete in every respect and supplementing that perfection by these practices will not bring about enlightenment. The awareness is the awakened one, nor are there any other awakened ones or any other awareness. It is bright and pure as the void, having no form or appearance whatsoever. To make use of your awareness to think conceptually is to lose being awake and find the confusion of mortal life of form. The ever-existing awakened one is not an awakened one of form or attachment. It is only necessary to awake to the one awareness, and there is nothing whatsoever to attain. This is the real awakened one. Awakened ones and all sentient beings are the one awareness and nothing else. This awareness is no awareness of conceptual thought and it is completely detached from form. So awakened ones and sentient beings do not differ at all. If students can only rid themselves of conceptual thought,

all will become clear. But if students do not rid themselves of conceptual thought, even though you strive eon after eon, confusion will always be present.

Our original awakened-nature is, in highest truth, devoid of any atom of objectivity. It is void, omnipresent, silent, pure; it is glorious and mysterious peaceful joy ~ and that is all. Enter deeply into it by awaking to it yourself. That which is before you is it, in all its fullness, utterly complete. There is nothing else beside. Even if you go through all the stages of a bodhisattva's progress towards being awake, one by one; when at last, in a single flash, you attain to full realization, you will be realizing the awakened-nature which has been with you all the time, and by all the foregoing stages you have added to it nothing at all. You will see that all those eons of work and achievement are no better than unreal actions performed in a dream. That is why the Buddha said, "I truly attained nothing from complete, unexcelled enlightenment."

This pure awareness, the source of everything, shines forever and on all with the brilliance of its own perfection. But the people of the world do not awake to it, regarding only that which sees, hears, feels, and knows, as awareness. Blinded by their own sight, hearing, feeling and knowing, they do not perceive the brilliance of the source-substance. If they would

only eliminate all conceptual thought in a flash, that source-substance would manifest itself like the sun ascending through the void and illuminating the whole universe without hindrance or bounds. Therefore, if you students of the Way seek to progress through seeing, hearing, feeling, and knowing, when you are deprived of your perceptions, your way to awareness will be cut off and you will find nowhere to enter. Only realize that, though real awareness is expressed in these perceptions, it neither forms part of them nor is separate from them. You should not start reasoning from these perceptions, nor allow them to give rise to conceptual thought; yet nor should you seek the one awareness apart from them or abandon them in your pursuit of the teaching. Do not keep them nor abandon them nor dwell in them nor cleave to them. Above, below and around you, all is spontaneously existing, for there is nowhere which is outside the awakened one-awareness.

When people of the world hear it said that the awakened ones transmit the doctrine of the awareness, they suppose that there is something to be attained or realized apart from awareness, and thereupon they use awareness to seek the awareness, not knowing that awareness and that which they seek are one. Awareness cannot be used to seek something from awareness; for then after millions of eons, the day of success will still not have dawned. Such an approach cannot be

compared with suddenly eliminating conceptual thought, which is the fundamental teaching. So, if you students of the Way are mistaken about your own real awareness; not recognizing that it is the awakened one, you will consequently look for it elsewhere, indulging in various devotions and practices and expecting to attain realization by such graduated practice. But, even after eons of diligent searching, you will not be able to attain to the Way. These methods cannot be compared to the sudden elimination of conceptual thought, in the certain knowledge that there is nothing at all which has absolute existence, nothing on which to lay hold, nothing on which to rely, nothing in which to abide, nothing subjective or objective. It is by preventing the rise of conceptual thought that you will realize awakening; and, when you do, you will just be realizing the awakened one who has always existed in your own awareness! Therefore the Buddha said, "I truly attained nothing from complete, unexcelled enlightenment." But to awaken suddenly to the fact there is nothing to be attained or a single action to be performed - this is the Way; this is really to be as an awakened one. It is only to be feared that you students of the Way, by the coming into existence of a single thought, may raise a barrier between yourselves and the Way. From thought instant to thought instant, no form, from thought instant to thought instant, no activity - that is to be an awakened one! If you students of the Way wish to become awakened ones, you need study no

doctrines whatsoever, but learn only how to avoid seeking for and attaching yourselves to anything. Where nothing is sought, this implies awareness unborn; where no attachment exists, this implies awareness not destroyed; and that which is neither born nor destroyed is the awakened one. Relinquishment of everything is the teaching, and he who understands this is an awakened one, but the relinquishment of all delusions includes relinquishment of the teaching.

Ordinary people look to their surroundings, while followers of the Way look to awareness, but the true teaching is to forget both. The former is easy enough but the latter very difficult. Men are afraid to forget their awareness, fearing to fall through the void with nothing to stay their fall. They do not realize that the void is not really void, but the realm of the real teaching. They do not realize that their own awareness is the void. This spiritually enlightening nature is without beginning, as ancient as the void, subject to neither beginning nor to destruction, neither existing nor not-existing, neither pure nor impure, neither clamorous nor silent, occupying no space, having neither inside nor outside, size nor form, color nor sound. It cannot be looked for or sought, comprehended by wisdom or knowledge, explained in words, contacted materially or reached by meritorious achievement. All the awakened ones together with all wriggling things possessed of life, share in this great

Nirvanic nature. This nature of awareness ~ awareness is the awakened one, and the awakened one is the teaching. Any thought apart from this Truth leads to error and confusion. You cannot use awareness to seek awareness, the awakened one to seek the awakened one, or the teaching to seek the teaching.

So you students of the Way should refrain from conceptual thought. Let a tacit understanding be all! Any mental process must lead to error. There is just a transmission of awareness to awareness. This is the proper view to hold. Be careful not to look outwards to material surroundings. To mistake material surroundings as reality of awareness is to mistake a thief for your son. The awakened-nature is like the void; though you were to adorn it with inestimable merit and wisdom, how could they remain there? They would only serve to obscure its original nature and render it invisible. To say it is the 'root of goodness' merely enables people to associate it with extraordinary nature. If you wish to experience enlightenment, do not indulge in such conceptions. If you will avoid concepts of existence and nonexistence in regard to absolutely everything, the teaching will then be perceived. Since the Buddha entrusted Kasyapa with the teaching until now, awareness has been transmitted with awareness, and these awarenesses have been identical. A transmission of the void cannot be made in words. A transmission in concrete terms cannot be the teaching.

Thus awareness is transmitted with awareness and these awarenesses do not differ. Transmitting and receiving are both a most difficult kind of mysterious understanding, so that few indeed have been able to receive it. In fact, however, awareness is not awareness and transmission is not transmission. [as both awareness and transmission are conceptual thoughts/ideas]

What is the Way?

Q: What is the Way and how must it be followed?

A: What sort of thing do you suppose the Way to be, that you should wish to follow it?

Q: What instructions have the masters everywhere given for Spiritual practice and the study of the Way?

A: Words used to attract the dull-witted are not to be relied on.

Q: If those teachings were meant for the dull-witted, I have yet to hear what Truth has been taught to those of really high intelligence.

A: If they are really men of high intelligence, where could they find people to follow? If they seek from within themselves, they will find nothing tangible; how much less can they find a Teaching worthy of their attention elsewhere! Do not look to what is called the Way by preachers, for what sort of Truth could that be?

Q: If that is so, should we not seek for anything at all?



A: By conceding this, you would save yourself a lot of wasted mental effort.

Q: But in this way, all activity would be eliminated. There cannot just be nothing.

A: Who called it nothing? Who is this fellow? But you want to seek for something.

Q: Since there is no need to seek, why do you also say that not everything is eliminated?

A: Not to seek is to rest tranquil. Who told you to eliminate anything? Look at the void ['clear light', 'blank screen'] in front of your eyes. How can you produce it or eliminate it?

Q: If I could reach this Truth, would it be like the void?

A: Morning and night I have explained to you that the void is both one and manifold. I said this as a temporary expedient, but you are building up concepts from it.

Q: Do you mean that we should not form concepts as human beings normally do?

A: I have not prevented you; but concepts are related to the senses; and, when feeling takes place, wisdom is shut out.

Q: Then should we avoid any feeling in relation to the Way?

A: Where no feeling arises, who can say what is right?

Q: Why do you speak as though I was mistaken in all the questions I have asked Your Reverence?

A: You are a man who doesn't understand what is said to him. What is all this about being mistaken? The Way is not

something which can be studied. Study leads to the retention of concepts and so the Way is entirely misunderstood. Moreover, the Way is not something specially existing; it is called the Mahayana awareness - awareness which is not to be found inside, outside, or in the middle. Truly it is not located anywhere. The first step is to refrain from knowledge-based concepts. The Way is spiritual Truth and was originally without name or title. It was only because people ignorantly sought for it empirically that the awakened ones appeared and taught them to eradicate this method of approach. Fearing that nobody would understand, they selected the name 'Way.' The Way of the awakened ones and the way of devils are equally wide of the mark. From the earliest times the sages have taught that a minimum of activity is the gateway of their teaching; so let no activity be the gateway of my teaching! Such is the gateway to the one awareness, but all who reach this gate fear to enter. This is not a doctrine of extinction! Few understand this, but those who do understand are the only ones to become awake.

Treasure this gem!